

di Teofane: recenti prospettive", pp. 389–97) on a document illustrating a journey undertaken by Theophanes of Hermopolis Magna to Antioch in the early 320s CE.

To sum up, the volume contains a number of interesting discussions providing more or less useful insights into the mobility of peoples, persons and ideas in the Ancient World. Many of the contributions constitute finished first-rate studies, others seem more like work papers or interim reports.

Kaj Sandberg

*The Cambridge Companion to Ancient Greek Political Thought*. Edited by STEPHEN SALKEVER. Cambridge University Press, New York 2009. ISBN 978-0-521-86753-5 (hb), 978-0-521-68712-6 (pb). IX, 380 pp. GBP 55, USD 90 (hb), GBP 19.99, USD 29.99 (pb).

This volume of the Cambridge companions series includes 12 chapters commissioned from a number of prominent scholars. To illustrate various aspects of the topic of "Ancient Greek Political Thought", the papers included here discuss Greek authors from Homer to Stoic philosophers of the Roman period. The term "political" refers to a wide spectrum of public life: the role of political institutions, the ethics of ruling, the complex relationship between citizens (in a broad meaning) and laws, not to mention the even more complex relationship between laws and justice. The book also includes useful attempts to define certain difficult concepts and metaphors such as "personal rights", "natural law" and "cosmopolis".

The first paper by Dan Hammer (= H.) on political thought in Homer raises the question of whether it is possible to discern concepts such as *demos*, gender or politics on general level in the *Iliad* and in the *Odyssey*, and if so, what period they should be seen as representing. The article itself is intriguing: H. argues that the distinction between the Homeric world and political concepts usually seen as typical of city-states should not be emphasized too much. Although the author makes several important observations (e.g., on the emergence of "people"), I was not altogether convinced and could not help asking myself whether it is really possible to study the Homeric epics as sources documenting political thinking or political philosophy. Does the fact that Homer offers us vivid descriptions of charismatic leaders and power struggles between them make these epic poems suitable material for studying political thinking?

Homer is followed by a chapter dedicated to drama, a genre in general deeply involved with human society both in antiquity and in modern times. In the paper on drama included here, called "Foundings vs. Constitutions", A. W. Saxonhouse (= S.) has chosen to concentrate on founding moments of a city, i.e., on scenes in which the beginnings of a political community can be felt and seen and on moments when individuals must realise the limits of their own power under the gods' "natural laws". These moments do not include the writing of laws or the drawing up of a constitution, something which in modern thinking is often regarded as being closely linked with the birth of a nation. To illustrate the problems involved in the founding of a nation with modern parallels S. briefly refers to views of, e.g., John Locke, Thomas Paine, Leo Strauss and Hannah Arendt. Having warmed up, S. proceeds to discuss Sophocles' *Antigone*, Aeschylus' *Oresteia* and Sophocles' *Oedipus Tyrannus*. In these plays, S. highlights moments when natural, unwritten laws clash with laws created by humans, laws that are no longer based on blood ties. S. argues that both the *Antigone* and the *Oresteia* make the idea of obligation

towards family (Antigone, Clytaemnestra) represent an older model of society, as contrasted with the justice that is based on rationality (Creon, Athena). In the new world it is the *ratio* that rules: even killing a family member can be justified with the needs of the larger community. S. observes that the picture these tragedies paint of one's possibilities to overcome unwritten rules and limits set by birth do not comply with modern thinking. But one could ask: why should it? Could it be that tragedies simply express the endless fight between humans, fate and gods in a way that was expected of this particular genre, rather than documenting social phenomena? However, if we do agree that drama can be used as a source for political thinking, S. points out where we should look and manages to make some perceptive remarks on the plays she deals with.

Greek historiography receives attention in two contributions, in those by Norma Thompson and Gerald Mara ("Thucydides and Political Thought"). Thompson (T.) compares Herodotus and Thucydides who both contribute to correcting the wrong ideas Athenians cherished (as all communities do) about their own past. Neither of these historians repeats the highly idealized story (supported, e.g., by iconography) of Harmodius and Aristogeiton as heroes who put an end to Athenian tyranny. Herodotus and Thucydides both observe that these "heroes" acted out of less admirable reasons and that tyranny actually did not end by their killing of Hipparchus. T. shows that after having turned over these "fake heroes" both historians introduce their own candidates for champions of anti-tyranny, Solon and Pericles, and through them make clear their personal preference for democratic government.

The middle section of the book discusses philosophical writing. There are three papers on Plato. In the first of them, Susan Bickford (= B.) deals with the Socratic method known as "political shaping of the soul", concentrating on the *Gorgias*, the *Republic* and the *Laws*. The author gives us an adequate overview of Socratic practice and emphasizes that the Socratic method of asking "silly" questions should not be understood as mere shaking of one's illusions of knowledge but rather as a process that should lead to "care for virtue". Chapter 6, David Roochink's (= R.) treatment of Plato's *Republic* is one of my favourites in this collection. R. lucidly guides the reader through the variety of the themes in Plato's long dialogue on the nature of justice. In a comprehensive manner, he discusses different aspects of this work, e.g., of Plato's critique of democracy, the part that is probably most difficult for modern readers to relate to. R. describes Plato's "beautiful city" in all its brutality (it is difficult to find another expression for it) and to balance the effect he also offers the reader a piece of Karl Popper's criticism of Plato. However, R. also shows that in reality all of Plato's regulations for the ideal city should not be taken too seriously. Plato might actually be understood to mean that, despite its faults, democracy is the best of all the "bad" forms of regimes.

In the third paper on Plato, Catherine H. Zuckert discusses Plato's dialogue Πολιτικός, the *Statesman*, and gives us interesting glimpses of the meaning and ideas of the "Elean stranger". The editor of the whole volume, Stephen Salkever, writes about Aristotle in a most convincing manner, making the point that Aristotle's political works *Nicomachean Ethics* and *Politics* comment upon and complement each other. Chapters 9 ("Lived Excellence in Aristotle's Constitution of Athens" by Jill Frank and S. Sara Monson) and 10 ("Virtue Politics of Democratic Athens" by Ryan K. Balot) touch upon questions dealing with Athenian political ideas and virtues, and the essence of citizenship. Before the last paper by Eric Brown, who leads the reader to the political philosophy of Cicero and the Stoics of the cosmopolitan Roman period ("The Emergence of Natural Law and the Cosmopolis"), there is an interesting essay in which

the author, Fred D. Miller Jr. (= M.), contemplates to what extent we can trace the origins of universal rights as we understand them today, e.g., human rights and children's rights. M. first analyses Greek and Latin words that are used in the context of rights and justice (e.g., *dike*, *kurios*, *ius*) and then looks into Plato's *Republic*, Aristotle's *Politics*, the speeches of Demosthenes, Stoic philosophy and some Judaic and Christian writings. He concludes that without doubt we can find in these sources a concept of rights, but merely as rights of an individual to claims of justice against members of the same community. It is true that Stoic philosophy and early Christianity anticipated ideas of human equality but did not go so far as to declare "human rights" and this concept is a product of later times, mostly the Enlightenment.

As an overall statement it must be said that the range of texts discussed in this book is of great interest, although I would have warmly welcomed a chapter on Aristophanes, and that the authors of all contributions have made an admirable effort to link ancient texts with questions of modern political theory. Most of the papers themselves are indeed useful. However, the reader, considering that this is a handbook of sorts, cannot help asking in what way they are meant to belong together and to contribute to each other. I feel that the main problem of this book is the missing common thread, the lack of continuity. As a common thread one could perhaps see the concept of "democracy" which can be traced in each chapter, but there also seems to be some undesirable overlapping between the contributions. One also wonders about the planned target audience of this "Companion". On the other hand, it must be said that this book does offer a selection of high quality essays and that there can be no doubt that those interested in the political ideas of the ancient Greeks will find much of interest in it.

Tiina Purola

*Rethinking Revolutions through Ancient Greece*. Edited by SIMON GOLDHILL – ROBIN OSBORNE. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge 2006. ISBN 0-521-86212-4. XV, 319 pp. GBP 55.

What is revolution? Did the ancient Greeks have one, or perhaps several? The concept of revolution is quite modern, and the way we are used to using it in our vocabulary depends heavily on the historical interpretation of the events in France in 1789.<sup>1</sup> To answer the second question first, I would like to quote Robin Osborne at the beginning of the Introduction to this volume: "The Greeks had no revolution". Nevertheless, we are used to thinking that the ancient Greeks were revolutionary in many ways, in politics, art, philosophy, and the sciences – as a matter of fact, in almost everything we can think of. This is the *raison d'être* of this multi-authored volume, which is just as much concerned with our view of things in the past as with the phenomena that we are trying to interpret with our present concepts. To illustrate this I would like to quote Helen King (p. 247): "From the Enlightenment onwards, identifying the fifth century [BC] as revolutionary has been closely linked to our view of rationality, seeing the sixth-century [BC] 'revolution' as concerned with removing the gods from the universe, and the fifth-century one as removing them from the material lives of humanity (see also Chapter 5 this volume)."

Chapters 1, "When was the Athenian democratic revolution?" by Robin Osborne, and 2, "Revolutions in human time: age-class in Athens and the Greekness of Greek revolutions" by

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<sup>1</sup> See, for example, *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, Band 8, s.v. Revolution.